



Mission Mystique: Belief Systems in Public Agencies (Public Affairs and Policy Administration)

By Charles T Goodsell

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In an era filled with mistrust for big government and big business, Charles Goodsell goes against this grain to draw attention to public agencies admired for what they do and how well they do it. In his groundbreaking new book, Goodsell places renewed focus on organizational mission and its potential to be a strong energizing force in government—one that animates a workforce internally and attracts admiration and talent externally. He offers a normative template for the mystique that underlies this phenomenon and highlights—in six rich case studies—a driving sense of purpose, a cultural and motivational richness, and a capacity for tolerating dissent while still innovating and learning. Analyzing what works best (and what doesn't), Goodsell provides a metric through which agency mystique can be evaluated and modeled. Goodsell's fresh take on public agencies not only defines good public administration in terms of ethical conduct, constitutional accountability, and performance effectiveness, but argues that the field must add the crucial standard of institutional vitality.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Charles T. Goodsell is Professor Emeritus of Public Administration at the Center for Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. His previous books on public administration are Mission Mystique (2011), The Case for Bureaucracy (1983, 1985, 1994, 2004), Public Administration Illuminated and Inspired by the Arts (co-edited, 1995), The Public Encounter (edited, 1981), and Administration of A Revolution (1965). Other works include The American Statehouse (2001), The Social Meaning of Civic Space (1988), and American Corporations and Peruvian Politics (1974). He has lectured and spoken on bureaucracy throughout the United States and in Canada, Mexico, Britain, Australia, and China.

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